

1950
Clara
Barton

21 February, 1950

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Thank you cordially for your note of February 15 transmitting the nomination of Clara Barton on behalf of Dr. Epler.

With appreciation of your interest, believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

Ralph W. Sockman

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
Val-Kill Cottage
Hyde Park, Dutchess County
New York

BL:ah

Barton

*See Miss Boardman's letter in
Selectors' file.*

Introductory Note

A statement, taken mainly from notes prepared in 1917, at his request, for the Honorable William Howard Taft, then Chairman of the Central Committee, the governing body of the American Red Cross, when a bill was introduced into Congress for the appropriation of \$1,000.00 for the purpose of placing a bronze tablet as a memorial to Clara Barton in the Memorial Building to the Heroic Women of the Civil War, Headquarters of the American Red Cross; and from the hearings of the Investigating Committee, appointed by the Honorable Richard Olney, under a resolution passed at the Annual Convention of the American Red Cross in 1903. The Committee consisted of the Honorable Redfield Proctor, Senator from Vermont, Chairman; Honorable William Alden Smith, Member of Congress from Michigan; and General Fred C. Ainsworth, Judge Advocate General, United States Army.

The hearings, at the request of Miss Barton's lawyers, were held behind closed doors and were ended, unfinished after three sessions. On Senator Proctor's recommendation to Miss Barton, she resigned.

Among those responsible for bringing about the investigation, and spoken of as "The Remonstrants" from the minority report to Congress, were the Honorable John W. Foster, former Secretary of State; the Honorable Hilary A. Herbert, former Secretary of the Navy; Major General John M. Wilson, Chief of Engineers, United States Army and first Vice President of the American Red Cross; Admiral William K. Van Reypen, Surgeon General, U.S. Navy, Retired; Mrs. Herbert Blaine Beale, daughter of James G. Blaine; Mrs. Anna Roosevelt Cowles, sister of President Theodore Roosevelt; Mr. William H. Michael, Chief Clerk of the State Department; Honorable Simon Wolf; Corporal M. L. Tanner; Mabel T. Boardman, and twelve others. Nine of these "remonstrants" were members of the Executive Committee of the American Red Cross at that time - 1903.

Statement

Briefly, Miss Clara Barton (originally Clarissa Harlow Barton), was born at North Oxford, near Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1821. She came to Washington in 1855.

In a biography of Miss Barton, published in 1912, a quotation reads as follows: "Having been the first woman ever appointed independently to a clerkship in the Department (Interior), I was placed equally with the male clerks at \$1,400 a year." In 1903, the then Secretary of the Interior, Honorable Ethan A. Hitchcock, wrote as to Miss Barton's connection with the Patent Office (under the Interior): "No Miss Barton is found upon the rolls of the Patent Office, from January 1, 1853 to date (1904).A further search has brought to light a letter of September 22, 1855 to the Secretary of the Interior, Robert McClelland, from Alexander DeWitt, Member of Congress, 'Addressing a line to you in behalf of Miss Clara A. (?) Barton, a native of my town and district who has been employed for the past year in the Patent Office.'" Mr. Hitchcock says further in his letter that "Miss Barton was perhaps employed to do some kind of copying. No woman received an appointment under the Secretary of the Interior until 1863."

Miss Barton did copying at the rate of \$1.00 per thousand words. The report from the Treasury Department on the checks paid to and endorsed by Miss Barton, cover the periods of 1855, '56 and '57 - before the war; and during all the months of the war, from January, 1861 to June, 1865 - excepting June, '62.

Proposed Bronze Tablet, in Memory of Clara Barton,
to Be Placed in the National Headquarters Building
of the American Red Cross

Concerning the propriety of placing a tablet to Miss Clara Barton in the Memorial Building must be based on one of two reasons:

First - Miss Barton's War Service

In a "Life of Clara Barton - The Angel of the Battlefields", the author says: "The original sources of this work were her unpublished diaries and lists." From these records, we learn Miss Barton's early services were with the Ninth Army Corps of McClellan's Army in the Peninsula Campaign, of which Dr. Thomas T. Ellis was Acting Medical Director. No mention is made of her services in his published "Diary". The records, filling many printed volumes of the two great relief organizations of the war - The Sanitary and Christian Commissions - do not mention Miss Barton's work. On the other hand, the records of the War Department and the printed reports of these two Commissions contain names of many men and women who devoted their entire time to the sick and wounded, without compensation, many sacrificing their lives in this service. Numerous references to Miss Barton's long absences from Washington, at the front, are mentioned in her "Biography."

The Treasury Department's records show payments for copying made to Miss Barton for each month during the war, but June, 1862. The checks were all endorsed by her.

Quoting again from her "Biography", she speaks of her offering her services to the Government in the following words: "In the capacity of a double clerkship at twice \$1,400 a year, the salary never to be given to me but to be turned back into the United States' Treasury - then poor to beggary. But there was no law for this and it could not be done - and I would not draw a salary from our Government in such plight, so I resigned and went into direct service of the sick and wounded troops. wherever found." Attention is called to the fact that after she resigned checks were continually paid to her, as stated above.

Miss Barton had received, previous to 1855, \$300 a year at her last post as a schoolteacher; what she received earlier, from her little school in Massachusetts, we do not know. From her copying, in 1855, '56 and '57, she earned \$2,799 - an average of \$933.00 a year. She had no other visible means of support. Her father died in 1862, leaving her property valued at approximately \$400, for which she had to give a Quit Claim of \$200. to her older sister.

In 1865, Miss Barton obtained from Congress \$15,000., to assist in getting information of missing soldiers and "to reimburse her for large sums of money expended from her own resources." Her "Biography" says she had expended \$8,000. of her own money. There exists, as far as is known, no record of the expenditures of the \$15,000. appropriation, nor of the money and supplies sent to Miss Barton in reply to her appeal for funds, published in the Worcester papers during the war.

Second - Miss Barton, Founder and President of the
American Red Cross

As to the propriety of placing the tablet in the Headquarters' Building because Miss Barton was the founder and president of the American Red Cross for twenty-three years, the Central Committee of the American Red Cross held that, besides the fact that such a tablet would not be appropriate in a Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War, there were other serious reasons which rendered the proposal highly objectionable. Evidence of certain facts in their possession will herewith be noted. The Committee, to prevent such a suggested tablet being placed in the Headquarters Building, passed unanimously, a resolution to the effect:

"Resolved, That no memorial inscription, tablet or monument of any nature to any individual be placed in or on the Memorial to the Heroic Women of the Civil War."

Attention is called to the lack of financial reports as to receipts and expenditures in practically all of the disasters in which the Red Cross functioned under Miss Barton.

Shortly after the Johnstown disaster, deeds on file in the District of Columbia show that Miss Barton purchased real estate in and in the vicinity of Washington to the value of some \$33,000. This property stood in the name of Miss Clara Barton.

After the incorporation of the Red Cross by Act of Congress in 1900, statements were required to be made annually as to its assets, receipts, expenditures, et cetera. No report, of any kind, was ever made of the purchase of the property by Miss Barton. The members of the Executive Committee were unaware of its existence until from an outside source information was received regarding its purchase. Certain checks were drawn upon the Red Cross' funds, deposited in the Riggs Bank at Washington, at the time these properties were purchased, though at that time there was no disaster relief in which the Red Cross was engaged.

On January 11, 1904, Miss Barton contracted for the sale of a portion of this property. It was only when a committee on investigation, referred to later, produced evidence of the possession of this property by Miss Barton that what had not been paid upon it was turned over to the Red Cross. The rest of the property remained in the possession of Miss Barton, but was transferred by her to a second party before her decease.

Before the investigating committee, appointed in 1904, one of the witnesses, Mr. John Morlan who was in Johnstown, testified that he had seen cash,

in form of bills, in a tin trunk of Miss Barton's, shortly before she left that city. Yet she reported to the State Committee, \$39,000. received; \$39,000. expended - no balance.

In the winter of 1892, an appeal for the Russian Famine Relief was issued and signed by many representative men and women including Vice President Levi P. Morton, Chief Justice Fuller, Honorable John Sherman, proposing that contributions should be sent to Miss Barton or to Riggs and Company, bankers. Riggs Bank showed that it received a total of some \$47,000. There is no record of what Miss Barton received. In her book "The Red Cross", the statement is made that for the Russian Famine, \$125,000, mainly food, was received. This means it was given in kind and not in contributions of money.

Certain facts were brought out by the witness, John H. Morlan, before the investigating committee. He testified that he receipted as an agent for Miss Barton, but could not recall the exact amount she received, but knew it was considerably more than \$12,000. He kept a book of these receipts. The investigating committee requested an auditor of the Treasury Department, Mr. Ambrose, to go over the books. Practically nothing was found with regard to receipts and expenditures, with the exception of this book referred to by Mr. Morlan. Later, when these books were stored in a building in Washington, the temporary Secretary of the Red Cross, Mr. Crawford, who was then secretary to Admiral Dewey, reported to Admiral Van Reyepen, then Chairman of the Executive Committee of the American Red Cross, that the books had been tampered with. Mr. Ambrose was sent for and discovered that the book, the only one that had lists of contributors, had been stolen.

Mr. Morlan further testified that he was instructed by Miss Barton to use some of these funds, less than \$1,000., after a drought in Texas. The rest he took with him, deposited them under Miss Barton's name in certain banks and later concentrated them in one bank; but returned a portion of the money - he thought about \$7,000. - to Miss Barton. Later the balance in his possession was placed in a bank at Bedford, Indiana. Upon this deposit, checks were drawn for payment on a purchase for a Red Cross Park and for its improvement.

Mr. Morlan further testified that Dr. Joseph Gardner offered to sell to Miss Barton a piece of property, to be called the Red Cross Park, for \$12,000. or \$12,500., provided it was made known to the world that it was a donation. Mr. Morlan reported this to Miss Barton and he testified that she said: "Go back and close the matter with Dr. Gardner, and secure a deed for the property." The deed of transfer shows that it was sold for a consideration of \$1.00.

Miss Barton then issued a circular, a copy of which we have, containing the letter, dated February 10, 1893, to Miss Clara Barton, President, American National Red Cross, offering to dedicate the park as a thanks-offering to humanity, placing it under her control and suggesting that other benevolent people might provide funds for the erection of educational, charitable or philanthropic edifices upon the property.

In the circular, Miss Barton publishes her reply in which she accepts the "gift of land" that he "so generously dedicated to the American Red Cross"; and she again refers to this act as a "gift."

In the deed it provides that Miss Barton would have complete control of the property during her life-time, and upon her death it should be placed under the control of the so-called donor, Dr. Gardner and his wife. Checks were exhibited which, though not made out to Dr. Gardner, were declared in payment for the property - though he would not have them use his name. Other checks show payment of wages, for improvements on the property, live stock, et cetera.

Mr. Morlan was made superintendent of this property, but later had difficulty with Dr. Gardner. In a letter, dated August 4, 1894, Mr. Morlan threatens to bring a lawsuit to recover monies he had placed in the property. In this letter he writes: "All I hate about the lawsuit is the world at large will have something to gossip about. I have all of Dr. ----- correspondence concerning the deal for the place. I would not like for that to come out to the public."

In Miss Barton's reply to his letter she says that she accepted the arrangement for which she considers herself not responsible; that those having to do with it should control their actions and passions as not to bring her into open disgrace and ruin the reputation of the Red Cross. She says: "Regarding your letter, I read it once, when it came. I have not opened it since. I was too much shocked and too much alarmed by its character and import to feel it well for me to peruse it again until I must, and I have for this reason delayed answering until today and now I can have but little to say. Indeed there seems to be no choice given me and no chance left me. It will mean failure, shame and infamy to me and death to the organization I have founded. I ask that before you proceed to make your grievances public by suit at law that you will give me time to withdraw from the entire concern by surrendering the deed, annulling the charter and returning the property to its original owner, making and proclaiming the Red Cross to have no connection whatever with the matter at issue..... True, I should be glad to be able to draw my work of the Red Cross to a close, bring all to an end, and be out of the country at this issue, as the result is sure to be disgrace and scandal which is manifestly intended, and Mr. Morlan, if you could give me time to arrange my own affairs to this end, I should be very grateful and would be glad of as immediate an answer as convenient in order that I may shape my own course with that expedition and certainty which the threatening aspect of conditions demand."

Mr. Morlan further testified, and also wrote in a letter, saying: "Another little incident that I will mention here is the part I took in a matter of which I am heartily ashamed. Miss Barton sent me to Robert Murphy, an influential lawyer of Johnstown, Penna., with five hundred dollars (check) and instructed me to (after describing the Doctor's "princely gift") say to Mr. Murphy that I would give five hundred dollars towards building a home for Miss Barton at the park and that owing to her noble work of relief in Johnstown that I felt sure that the citizens there would want to start the work of building the home and that I would leave the five hundred dollars in his hands and let it be a starter for Johnstown's contribution for a fund for that purpose. At that time I was working for her and thought that if Miss Barton said it was right, it certainly was right; but later learned the true character of the woman."

Mr. Robert Murphy confirmed by letter this statement of Mr. Morlan, saying the money was received in the form of a check. He sent the following document: "Received February 20, 1893, from John H. Morlan of Fairfield, Illinois, a certain check dated February 24, 1893, drawn on Willis Brothers, bankers, Enfield, Ill., payable to my order for \$500.00 (five hundred dollars) and signed by the said John H. Morlan. Said check being a conditional contribution to a fund proposed to be raised in this city as a testimonial to Miss Clara Barton and to be applied to the cost of erecting a dwelling house on property situate in the State of Indiana. (Signed) Robert S. Murphy."

The funds deposited by Mr. Morlan in the Enfield bank were deposited as Red Cross funds and were part of the Russian Famine Relief contributions.

In 1896, after the Armenian massacres, an Armenian Relief Committee was formed, of which Mr. Spencer Trask of New York was chairman. Mr. Trask in a deposition which was placed before the investigating committee stated that the Red

Cross was used because of its international recognition. Mr. Trask said: "While the Red Cross Society had a nominal board of officers, we were soon convinced that Miss Barton alone managed everything. As Miss Barton absolutely refused to recognize any accountability upon her part to our committee and was very sensitive to any suggestion from us, we finally decided that it would be unwise for us to continue giving her our entire support as we otherwise would have done..... Our Committee gave only seventy thousand dollars to Miss Barton. She received in addition some further sums from Local Committees in Massachusetts and elsewhere and also received money sent directly to the Red Cross. It was with the utmost difficulty that we secured from the Red Cross some kind of accounting and when the figures were finally sent to us from Constantinople, they were not such as any good business man would consider entirely satisfactory."

An Armenian merchant of Boston also wrote and complained to the Red Cross that they could receive no accounting of considerable sums, turned over to Miss Barton from himself and his fellow-Armenians.

On February, 1899, the Cuban Relief Committee of New York City issued a final statement. Miss Barton's nephew, Mr. Stephen E. Barton, was chairman of this committee. The total receipts of the committee were \$215,156.11. At the close of its work, a balance of \$9,620.77 remained. This amount was turned over to the Red Cross for hospital work in Cuba; and there was no report made of the use of the money.

During the war with Spain, there were organized various Red Cross Committees in New York City, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, et cetera. They administered their own funds and made accurate statements as to the receipts and disbursements of funds. No report was ever made of the amount received by the American Red Cross. Its funds were deposited in different banks and it has not been possible to obtain records of them. We have one check-book of the Riggs Bank which shows deposits of \$13,394. This included a contribution of \$3,774 from the German Red Cross. It does not include a contribution of 25,000 francs, sent by the French Red Cross, and other gifts from the Austrian Red Cross and that of Portugal, of which records are to be found in the reports of the Red Cross Societies of these countries - but no record here. The check-book shows various checks drawn to Miss Barton for the rent of a house in Havana, services of Mr. Joseph Sheldon of Connecticut, and various other individuals - reasons for such checks not being given. Three checks for \$1,000. each were sent to Cuba for hospital relief, but no record was made as to how these funds were expended. The remainder seems to have been paid in salaries and for the maintenance of the household at Glen Echo, Maryland (near Washington, D.C.), Miss Barton's home.

The Red Cross was incorporated by Congress in 1900, after which an annual report was required as to receipts and expenditures. There were no funds turned over to the Red Cross by Miss Barton. These were generally deposited to the President's fund, against which Miss Barton drew. After its incorporation, the Philadelphia Red Cross paid to the Red Cross Headquarters \$750.00 which, at the suggestion from the Red Cross was made out simply to Miss Clara Barton - and was so endorsed. No report of it was included in the Red Cross report of receipts. The same year, October, 1900, there was paid into this President's fund \$1,025, from a Mr. W. H. Wilson. There is no report concerning this.

Riggs Bank transactions show from 1893 to 1895 - during which period there were no disasters - total deposits of \$14,394. to this Red Cross account; and that some \$13,861. were drawn out of these funds which are not accounted for. It is evident that other monies were either deposited in other banks, or checks cashed, which were not reported.

Letters from Miss Barton to Mr. Morlan indicated that funds in his hands were invested apparently in a personal investment for Miss Barton, though the funds he had deposited were Red Cross funds for the Russian Famine Relief.

As it was the habit to make no financial statements or records, it is impossible to find out, excepting from a few special cases, what amounts were received or how expended. But, there is sufficient evidence to show that there was serious misuse of funds contributed by the public for the relief of suffering.

As none of this information placed before the Investigating Committee was made public, it was thought best, when the new Act of Incorporation of 1905 was prepared, to include Miss Barton's name among the Incorporators, lest ignorance of the reason for omitting it being unknown, might arouse opposition in Congress.

I may quote a letter, sent by Bishop Potter and other prominent men and women who, from past experience of the Red Cross, were convinced of the necessity of a reorganization, to those in Washington who were interested in bringing this about:

"The undersigned persons who, in times of previous activities, and during the war with Spain, have been associated with the American National Red Cross, desire to state that in their judgment the financial arrangements of this association need reorganization in order to merit the confidence of the American public.

"They most heartily endorse the efforts now being made by some of the prominent members of the Red Cross in Washington to thoroughly reorganize the association, and to provide for a careful and business-like administration of its finances. (Signed) Henry C. Potter, Spencer Trask, Robert C. Ogden, Cleveland H. Dodge, Helen Fidelia Draper (Mrs. W.K. Draper), Howard Townsend, Elizabeth Mills Reid (Mrs. Whitelaw Reid), Sam Wolverton, F. Augs. Schermerhorn, A. S. Solomons, Gustaf H. Schwab, Olivia M. Cutting (Mrs. Bayard Cutting)."